Interviewee: Mason Wong

Interviewers: Grace Yoo and Juice Canales

Video Recorder: Yoko Tamada

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Transcriber: K. Vanessa Muniz

Bio: Mason Wong, is a first-generation Chinese American organizer. He participated in the 1968-1969 SF Student Strikes and was the president of the ICSA. Wong was born in New York City, but moved to the city of San Francisco at a very young age. After being accepted into the U.S. Marines, he was offered an extension of his time served but turned it down to attend SF City College in ‘65 and eventually, San Francisco State University in ‘68. While in the Marines, he witnessed segregation and discriminations towards other minority groups, which began his understanding for the movement.

Abstract: 00:00:06-00:06:25 Wong speaks on his childhood, and family’s movement that led them to San Francisco. 00:07:25-00:17:48 He goes on to speak on his involvement in the marines and his home neighborhood, Chinatown, SF. 00:18:07-00: 27:41 Wong touches on the reasons he experiences and witness that led him to the movement. 00:27:55-00:35:57 He speaks on some of his background information such as his parents, his first and second wives, his children and his memories. 00:35:59-00:55:00 Wong is hired as Director of Youth Service Center, he goes on speak on his connections to his community and the ways it led to his involvement in the SF State strikes.

00:00:06 **Grace Yoo:** …Mason, can you just introduce yourself; who you are, and when and where you were born?

00:00:16 **Mason Wong:** My name is Mason Wong. I was born in New York City and live in San Francisco most of my life.

00:00:35 **Grace Yoo:** Tell us how you got to San Francisco.

00:00:36 **Mason Wong:** I went to San Francisco, and then my mother and father came back. My father was a Chinese opera star.

00:00:50 **Grace Yoo:** can you talk about that some more?

00:00: 58 **Mason Wong:** Well, with(in) San Francisco Chinatown there is a community of actors and actresses. They got together and they made films. I think my father, (they) made the first color film and shipped it back to Hong Kong. So that's how my stepmother got famous because she was in the film. And then she went back with my father. My parents were divorced at that time. My father Wong Chiu Mo, Herbert Wong and her Chinese name Chow Kwun Ling. She became famous, she did 149 or 194 movies, without even being auditioned. She was demanded that much. Anyway, my father and mother marry up. They placed me with a Basque family and lived there for eight years. This lady, Miriam Iteague became in my eye, my real mother. Who remains in my heart everyday. Those were some of the happiest moments in my life. She had a knack of taking care of children with allergies and things like that. She was highly sought because the Chinese doctors would recommend her to them.

00:02:20 **Grace Yoo**: How old were you at the time?

00:02:22 **Mason Wong**: I think it was maybe one or two years old.

00:02:28 **Grace Yoo**: So, your mom and dad divorced.

00:02:30 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, so they kind of led their own lives.

00:02:32 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah. And your mother was also an opera singer?

00:02:35 **Mason Wong**: Well, she was more hanging around. She hung around with them, her story is a little bit different. She was like the fourth or fifth wife of this guy in China. He was like a warlord. So she goes to the opera and sees my dad, my dad was probably a really good-looking dude. He was seeing her on the side and from what I heard, he got his ass kicked in by her husband. So finally she asked permission. They went to her huscband and asked for permission to go with my dad. My mother gave birth several times but they were RH babies and did not survive. My parents came to the U.S. so my father could preform in NY. I have the same medical problem, but the doctor saved my life by giving me complete transfusion. That's why my name is Mee Song, which means born in America. Finally, after 8 years at staying at mama's, which is what I called her. I joined her in NY and stayed there for a year. my mother decided she wanted to take care of me. So I go back with her to New York, and lived there for a year. Came back and then my mother and her boyfriend said 'Do you want to go camping?' when we came back the city. I say yeah, I want to go camping, never been camping. So they dropped me off at this boy's home. Chung Mei Home for boys in El Cerrito, where homeless boys from Chinatown were placed. So I got duped in this going to this home. I was brought up in a Chinese Home for Boys.

So after that, after a couple of years, my mother finally took me out because I guess they didn't want to pay the fee and they just bought a home. (but) Then after a year she passed away giving childbirth to my second sister. Actually, I have three sisters, one from my father and his wife Patricia, Sandi, the other Tine and Kathy from my mother. She came in so they migrated back to the U.S. So when my father came back I thought I was gonna stay with them. Disappointment. But because I was a juvenile delinquent, I was never in school, I was attending continuation high (school) in San Francisco. That's where they put all the drop outs. I would go to school at three o'clock and school would be dismissed at 3:10.

00:05:18 **Grace Yoo**: Can you talk about that? Was it just because everything was unstable?

00:05:24 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, I guess I said, I didn't care. I didn't have any motivation for school. My family situation wasn't that great. I was still with my stepdad and his new wife and I was kind of bouncing around.

00:05:39 **Grace Yoo**: how old were you when your mother died?

00:05:41 **Mason Wong**: I think it was around 13 or something. I had sort of an unstable childhood. (So) Everybody knew who my father was, so people would tell me that they knew when my dad was coming back. I used to hate that story because they were all bullshitting. So finally, when my dad came back, they sent me to Seattle. But before that, I tried to enlist in the Air Force, but I failed the examination because I had a juvenile record when we assaulted a kid. So I didn't pass, I guess the physical, the psychological.

00:06:20 **Grace Yoo**: were you living in Chinatown? Where were you living?

00:06:22 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, I lived in Chinatown.

00:06:24 **Grace Yoo**: Okay, you were in that part of the city.

00:06:25 **Mason Wong**: I lived in Chinatown, I went up there for high school. After high school, I came back. When I came back, I was at my beauty shop and this guy walks in. He's from the Naval Reserves, and he found me, I don't know how he found me. He asked me, how come I didn't inform the Seattle draft board that I moved to San Francisco. I didn't know I had to do that. I said oh shit! So when I was in Seattle, I tried to get into the naval reserves at that time, they were taking over 16, but I didn't pass the eye test. So my friend Danny Jue went to sign up for the Marines and asked me to go with him. I said, Okay, I'll come because maybe I can get my four F rating because I got declined two times. And next minute I knew they took me, so I went into the Marine Corps.

00:07:25 **Grace Yoo**: were you in the Marine Corps in Vietnam?

00:07:29 **Mason Wong**: No, I went to join the Marines under the six month service program at the time. They asked if I wanted to extend my enlistment, I could to my duty station choice. I picked Japan and was stationed with the 1st Marine Air Wing in Iwakuni, Japan. At that time, we were getting involved, heavily involved. People didn't know it. We were building helicopter bases in Laos. We were so scheduled to go to Laos. At that time they had SEATO forces much like NATO and were rendervousing in Subic Bay, Philippines, and within 24 hours, they called it

off. So I'd read the reports and say, Oh, I'm going to these countries, (there's) health issues, the infrastructure was lousy. If you ever get hurt? There's no medical facilities, people didn't speak English. I was like, Oh, what are we going to do? So finally, I came back from overseas, and then I got the opportunity to be stationed in San Francisco. I had to extend my service for another 18 months. So it was like living at home, but I had to go deal with reporting every morning at 100 Harrison Street, which was taught marine reserve headquarters. (That's how we) got into data processing and stuff like that. So they asked me if I wanted to stay in, and I told them, no, I want to go to college. So what happened was that, in 1965, those who were in the service were automatically extended for one year. That's when they started shipping everyone to Vietnam. So in a way, I got lucky because the Marines suffered high casualty rate in Vietnam. I got out, then I was working in the post office and going to City College part-time. After I finished my two years, I came to the state. I think it was back in '68 that I came to state. I was majoring in history and political science. At that time, they had a student movement going on. It just started. I mean state had it going on for about two years already. In Chinatown, that's when we had the issue of the juveniles. I was at that meeting where George Woo was representing, Wah Ching, because they needed someone who spoke Eglish. I was at the Chung Wah auditorium. I stated to go to ICSA meetings when I transferred from City College to State. So at that time Laureen Chew, Irene Collier, and some of the other ones, Spencer Joe, bunch of people. At that time, the issue was whether or not ICSA would get involved in supporting Juan Martinez for a position as instructor. Now, the group itself was made up of two groups, one was American born and the other one were foreign students, lot of them were from Taiwan, or Hong Kong. Of course, they don't get politically involved. They're more interested in having dances and parties. So there was another Chinese group.

00:11:37 **Mason Wong:** I forgot the name of it but they're basically a party group. A place for guys to meet girls because they didn't know how to. At that time, when I was a teen, the number of Chinese immigrants were very small. Anyone who lived between Broadway and Bush, and from Van Ness to Grand Avenue, that was the Chinese community. So if you want to date a girl? Usually, it's like walking distance, you can go to a movie, and things like that. They (had) community dances, that was it. There weren't that many girls at that time. So you had to ask for a date, you've gotta call a week ahead of time. You want to take her to a movie and all that, and so you had to wait like Wednesday, was the answer yes or no?

00:12:44 **Grace Yoo**: Did you feel like in the Asian American community in general, there weren't a lot of women it was mostly male?

00:12:48 **Mason Wong**: Well, there was a lot. It was equal, but a lot of them were within the community. So you kind of hang around in groups.

00:12:57 **Grace Yoo**: You would always stay in Chinatown, even when you were at San Francisco State?

00:13:00 **Mason Wong**: Yeah. I lived in Chinatown.

00:13:02 **Grace Yoo:** What were your cross streets?

00:13:04 **Mason Wong**: I lived in Ross Alley, 12 Ross Alley, down below was the world

famoud rickshaw bar at the time. Across was Dragon Dynasty owned by Marin Corps buddy, Danny Jue.

00:13:26 **Grace Yoo**: Who were you living with, in Chinatown?

00:13:29 **Mason Wong**: Well at that time, when I got back, (I) was with my father,

00:13:32 **Grace Yoo**: What was that relationship with your father like, after you came back?

00:13:38 **Mason Wong**: Well, I don't know, it was kind of distant we couldn't communicate that well. He had a falling out with his wife so they got a divorce, which was a big thing in Hong Kong (be)cause she got involved with this other Chinese opera star. He came over here to do a show and all that, he stayed at our place. And (when) he went to New York, she traveled with him to keep him company and that's when the relationship started. I asked my sister about it and she said when they came back to the U.S. they kind of drifted apart because they were working in the restaurant. So he had the evening hours she had the daytime hours so they kind of drifted apart. So that was a big scandal in Hong Kong.

00:14:37 **Grace Yoo**: Was it a scandal in San Francisco Chinatown?

00:14:40 **Mason Wong**: Well, yeah

00:14:42 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah, cause your dad's like this famous opera singer. It was kind of the latest gossip

00:14:43 **Mason Wong:** Yes, I would talk to my dad and he wouldn't shut up on his side of the story. He would tell everyone that story so he gets everyone's sympathy and got the papers in Hong Kong to back them up.

00:15:05 **Mason Wong:** Yeah, full-blown celebrity. Anyway, getting back to state. The issue was Juan Martinez. At that time I was getting awareness and supporting all minorities, which is important. Then (there was) the other issue of George Murray (getting) a position. So I go to the meetings, and then there's wavering, there's no movement. Juan was always talking to the head of the organization, her name was Maryland. (She) and this guy, Mark Shim, they were leaders of the organization. I talked to Al Wong, I knew Al, we grew up together. Al was very active in doing the free speech movement in Berkeley, SIC, the Black Students' Organization, he was very deeply involved. So I see Al walking down the campus, and I say, hey Al! Come on over, I want you to take a look at this. So I bring him to the meeting. He comes in, and because he's more progressive, he's just saying, oh, man, this got to change. So we had him and then there's Jeff Chan was coming to the meetings too. So then we started talking. Now, he's putting his two cents in. Suddenly, there was dissension, and so it was time to elect new officers. So I'm sitting there, Al points to me. Next minute, they put my name and I got elected president. So by default, I become president. So the first thing we did was, BSU heard about it, so we contacted them. And of course, they came in, we started talking. Then we talk with Juan Martinez and stuff like that. Al, because, he was more politically astute than I was, I had him talking to those groups.

00:17:37 **Grace Yoo:** By the way, were you older compared to other folks? You were kind of older because you've done the Marines and college

00:17:44 **Mason Wong:** Yeah, we were. Al and I were older.

00:17:46 **Grace Yoo**: So people kind of look to you for leadership

00:17: 48 **Mason Wong**: I guess so, I think we were older. A lot of the guys who were involved in the strike were veterans. Even the Black students, a lot of the guys were in the service. So I think maybe that gave us that an edge of maturity.

00:18:07 **Grace Yoo**: People don't discuss that enough about the strike. That maybe you were veterans.

00:18:12 **Mason Wong**: I think Nesbit Crutchfiled was Air Force Lieutenant. That's how we started getting involved in the thing. We didn't know about the strike, I only knew that there was more potential of a strike and so Al was like a ___ doing this, so that developed the Third World Liberation Front. So, I said, okay, you (Al) go there and be our representative. Each organization had one representative that'd go to the meetings. I think (it was) Ron Quidchay with the Filipinos, Penny Nakatsu, Tony Miranda and Roger Alvarez for La Raza. They had La Laza, they had a combination, and then they finally formed one group. That's how we got started. At that time, when I came to State, I took a Mandarin class because I wanted to learn Chinese. And I tell you, it is not easy. It's very, very, very difficult. At that time, the only Asian Professor we had was Jim Hirabayashi, so I took his class. Cause, hey, there's a lot of Asians here, I'm gonna take his classes. He was an anthropologist, so from that, he gave me his side on what Japanese culture was, which was interesting to me. And then we said, okay, we want to have courses where we have to tell people what our side of the story is, about our contribution. I mean, that was the main purpose of Asian American Studies. In my view, (it) is to get our voice and tell our side of the story. Now as I get older, and I go through YouTube and websites, there's a lot of stories that we have, that (have) to be preserved. Like, the Chinese in Mississippi, they were such an influential part of that development, but I don't think the Black (community) recognized that. The history of Asians in the Midwest, and how they migrated over there…

00:20:46 **Grace Yoo**: You became a spokesperson, really…

00:20:49 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, I had to learn to speak and all that

00:20:52 **Grace Yoo**: Do you remember what kinds of things you would say, as you're meeting in this coalition?

00:20:58 **Mason Wong:** The thing was, we were using that as a platform to talk about the conditions of Chinatown. That this is a ghetto. Even though we have tourists, there's poverty, and then a level of social problems that we have. At that time, we're starting to say, okay, we got to present our side of the story. And it's not this picturesque thing that a lot of the Chinese establishment wanted to do, because, from their viewpoint, they're trying to create tourism. To bring people, to come to Chinatown, cause at that time, people come to Chinatown to eat. And if Chinese community as a whole, itself, we would all go to Chinatown to eat. During the weekends, everybody would go out and eat and then they would go to the restaurants and would

have Sui Yeh (late night meal). So you would see all the husbands and wives together constantly. It's like a social gathering on the weekends. So I think that's taught by Chinatown, a lot of people don't talk about. The community itself, in many ways, was a lot of fun. The things that we could do without the harassment or cops bothering us because the cops were paid off.

00:22:27 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah. Well, do you remember what it was like when you ventured outside of Chinatown?

00:022:31 **Mason Wong**: Well because I was in the service… when I was living with my mama in Richmond district, I was the only Chinese going to George Peabody, at that time. And then, (she was like) my sister, Mayley Tom, we were together. She was the second one going to that school. I think once or twice someone would call me a chink in grammar school. I'd go home, crying. I'd say, oh someone called me a chink and Mama'd say, 'Look, you're just as good as everybody else, don't you worry about it.' All my friends were white, so I didn't really have anyone yelling at me saying some racial slurs or anything like that.

00:23:32 **Grace Yoo**: when do you think you've developed a racial consciousness though?

00:23:35 **Mason Wong**: I think once I live in the boy's home. We would go to public school, so every day at morning, we would just go and walk to school. So of course, a big column of Chinese boys going to grammar school. We knew where (it'd be) different because we lived in this boy's home. One time, (there were) kids there, (they) were Cub Scouts. They were coming in with cub scout uniforms, and they said, 'ah Let's go push these Chinese around'. We got

our guys. They had a grand big playground, it's a huge playground. They gathered around in a group, they came running toward us, and we got our group and we charged at them, and we scared the shit out of them. They just ran. At that time, we knew,

00:24:37 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah, you knew you had to organize, it sounds like

00:24:40 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, you know, we weren't afraid to fight. While I was living in Chinatown, we would be getting out, drinking and having fun. A lot of the white guys will be coming in and getting drunk, so if they'd get us upse, we would beat them up.

00:25:06 **Mason Wong**: So that's why now I think a lot of Asians, they try so hard to fit in. That they want to be liked, and because of that, they get their ass kicked.

00:25:22 **Grace Yoo**: Well, just the rise in anti-Asian hate

00:25:24 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, and they're not standing up to it, and also, because of the Asians elderly. They're so vulnerable of course, just like when a lion goes hunting, they don't go for the stronger, they go for the most vulnerable. Now you get all these people beating up on elderly people.

00:25:49 **Grace Yoo**: do you think, in your time, that would have never happened, because young people would have just said no…?

00:25:55 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, you don't do that. At that time, after a while, as you get older, you

had the gangs in Chinatown. They would not have allowed it. They had their own wars, but then you didn't come to Chinatown to mess around. No. There was, well, in those days they would be selling illegal firecrackers. So everyone (had their) territories. They would sell firecrackers to the white kids, and after they walked away, the other group would take their firecrackers away and so on again. But that firecracker thing became very big business, so finally they stopped it. Now you don't have them. Even my brother-in-law is still selling firecrackers in his 30s. Can't believe it.

00:26:43 **Grace Yoo**: You had mentioned, as a youth did you get in trouble with the law?

00:26:49 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, we did because we got in a fight and one of the guys stabbed someone so we got locked up in juvenile hall.

00:26:55 **Grace Yoo**: Okay, so, you were trying to, just, fight back?

00:26:58 **Mason Wong:** No, we were the ones, it was my knife that stabbed the guy. I gave it to this guy, and he did it. Nearly killed him too.

00:27:08 **Grace Yoo**: How old were you at the time?

00:27:10 **Mason Wong**: 15, I think so. I think I ran into the guy one time, apologized. I ran into him many years ago.

00:27:21 **Grace Yoo**: Would you consider yourself (like you were like) a tough kid?

00:27:24 **Mason Wong**: Well, I guess I was just a juvenile running around.

00:27:34 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah. I mean, growing up, it sounds like there wasn't a lot of supervision.

00:27:41 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, I just hung around pool halls, staying out all night. Going to North Beach at that time, they had all the coffee shops and stuff like that.

00:27:51 **Grace Yoo**: Well, you lived on Ross Alley, so much going on on Ross Alley.

00:27:55 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, after, even when I came back from the service, I lived in Ross Alley with my parents, and then I knocked up my first wife because she was coming here for school, living with us.

00:28:12 **Grace Yoo**: Did you meet her at San Francisco?

00:28:13 **Mason Wong**: No, her family knew my family, my father. In Hong Kong, they (my sister) grew up together. At that time, just a young guy just fooling around all over the place. Got her pregnant and her father was pissed, so was my father because they were close friends in Hong Kong.

00:28:38 **Grace Yoo**: How old were you at the time?

00:28:39 **Mason Wong**: I was like 20, in my early 20s. She had to leave the school at Notre

Dame in Belmont. It was a girl's (school). So they had to get a priest to have her sign off on this thing to release the school for any kind of liability, and things like that. Then her mother came to the US to help her. She eventually stayed in the US. I guess we got married when we were young. Couple of years ago, I apologize to her for knocking her up, for ruining her career. She could have gone to college.

00:29:28 **Grace Yoo**: How long were you married for?

00:29:29 **Mason Wong**: About four, five years

00:29:33 **Grace Yoo**: And she had primary custody of the kid?

00:29:27 **Mason Wong**: She would stay with me, but finally, I met my second wife. She was young, so she not gonna bother to take care of my daughter, so my wife took her over.

00:29:53 **Grace Yoo**: So when you were at San Francisco State, you were married? (Yes) You had to be kind of mature.

00:30:00 **Mason Wong**: Yeah. I was married. I was working in the post off at night, part-time.

00:30:04 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah, that's amazing. And you had this kid too, and you were the leader of ICSA. Oh, my goodness, that's a lot going on.

00:30:11 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, my wife wasn't too happy about it. She worked in the mayor's office at that time

00:30:15 **Grace Yoo**: She did? Who was taking care of the kid?

00:30:16 **Mason Wong**: Well, my mother-in-law. And then when she went to school, and when I was divorced, Laureen Chew came to be like a nanny. She was Milissa's teacher. After I became director of the youth service center, Laureen would help watch her and then bring her back home. That's why Laureen and I are so close. Because she worked at Commodore Stockton and we lived in Ross Alley.

00:30:50 **Grace Yoo**: Oh, my goodness, that's so sweet. So she knew your daughter well?

00:30:53 **Mason Wong**: Oh, yeah. When my daughter passed away, Laureen came to the funeral.

00:31:09 **Grace Yoo**: So sorry she passed. How old was she?

00:31:11 **Mason Wong**: She was in her 40s, she got in an accident, so she became paraplegic. So over the years, she just had so many medical problems. And then psychologically, depression and stuff like that. But then finally, she got a boyfriend that stayed with her all these years. He took it very, very hard. But no, Laureen was very, very, very good with her. That's why when Laureen wanted, asked, me for anything here, I just come and do it. Yeah, she calls me, and I say 'Okay, where do I have to show up.'

00:31:57 **Grace Yoo**: What was Laureen like, how many years apart are you two?

00:32:00 **Mason Wong**: Oh god, I don't know, we were in college together. She was very vocal (G.Y. 'Still is') I mean, one time we had George come to school to talk and she gave him her two cents. She was very strong. I mean, you didn't take shit from her. One thing I remember about Laureen, always comes up with a new hairdo. Yeah, always getting cuts and stuff like that. (G.Y. 'she was a diva, a movie star') Yeah, but she was funny.

00:32:44 **Grace Yoo**: (Do you remember growing, you didn't grow, live, in the same area.) You were in Ross Alley, was she around the block or?

00:32:51 **Mason Wong**: No, this was college so she lived out in the Richmond District. I mean, around the 60s then Chinese start moving up to the Richmond area.

00:33:07 **Grace Yoo**: Why the Richmond? Why did people move…

00:33:09 **Mason Wong**: Well because that's when they first got the houses. When I living on Ross alley, I remember stories of Chinese going out house hunting, but they're doing it at night. They're doing it at night in a car and looking around. They would be secretly buying places.

00:33:29 **Grace Yoo**: Well Tom Kim's mother said they bought their house in West Portal, a Jewish family acted like they were buying it for them. They did the transaction at nighttime. And the Jewish family was like kind of like staying there until, you know, like undercover.

00:33:42 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, there's a lot of that going on. That's why, when Proposition 14 came out, anti-discrimination, lots of Chinese landlords were pissed. Racism came up.

00:34:00 **Grace Yoo**: So where did you move in the Richmond, like, what were your cross streets?

00:34:03 **Mason Wong**: After I got out of college and everything, went, worked for an insurance company. When I met my second wife, I lived out in Fisherman's Wharf, on Bay Street. So my mother-in-law was in town at that time, and she was visiting friends. She went to someone that lived where I live now, they were next door, and they just mentioned that this young couple was looking for a buyer. They asked me to go take a look at it. I was going house hunting for my wife and I hated it. God, I don't like driving up the wall.

00:34:48 **Grace Yoo**: Well, even back then, everyone wanted to live here, right?

00:34:50 **Mason Wong**: Yeah. I hear House hunting like this, didn't like it and said forget it. So finally, I went to the place where I live, so I checked it out. My wife asked me how was it, and I said it's not bad. She went to take a look at it, and then we bought the place. So this young Vietnamese couple, they own a restaurant on Polk Street, it was very popular with the gay community. And then when they had AIDS, their business just plummets, it just went down the drain. So John Nguyen became a bus driver for Muni.

00:35:30 **Grace Yoo**: Oh, wow. So you bought their place, basically? (M.W. Yeah) Wow, how Unfortunate.

00:35:35 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, I would see him and his family. His daughter went to Penn, and then got out and went to law school, became a lawyer.

00:35:45 **Grace Yoo**: Wow. So you met your second wife when you were an insurance broker?

00:35:47 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, no, I was the Director of a Youth Service Center at that time.

00:35:55 **Grace Yoo**: Where, where were you director of youth center?

00:35:56 **Mason Wong**: On Columbus Street

00:35:57 **Grace Yoo**: Was it with CYC?

00:35:59 **Mason Wong**: Yes, CYC, it was before, it had a different title. So I took over the job after Barry died. Cause I flunked out of law school. I went to law school at Berkeley with Terry Teriuchi, Dale Minami, Penny Nakatsu, Rod Quidchay. A whole bunch of us were there.

…- 00:36:20-00:36:50

Grace Yoo attempting to take a picture/video of Mason Wong to send to Terry

00:36:50 **Grace Yoo**: Wow, So, were you in the same class as like Penny and Jerry?

00:36:54 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, I think we were cause we were all left state at that time.

00:36:58 **Grace Yoo**: Wow, and did you drop out after your first semester?

00:37:00 **Mason Wong**: Second, I was going through a divorce and stuff, and then I realized, oh my god, this stuff's too much. When I think about it, I should've left after the first semester, and maybe gone back to school because I had a history degree. I couldn't do anything with it.

00:37:24 **Grace Yoo**: But were they trying to get the strikers to law school? That's what Terry said

00:37:27 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, but after I became Director of Youth Service Center, and I was after Barry Fong-Torres was killed.

00:37:42 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah, what happened?

00:37:43 **Mason Wong**: Well, he got shot and got murdered.

00:37:46 **Grace Yoo**: Okay, and that's been funds towards his brother.

00:37:49 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, and the reason why was because he was trying to be the mediator between two groups. When one of them thinks you're on one side, so I think that's what happened to him. So I came by, I said I had to look for a job, so I said, this easiest job because no one's gonna take it. What's the odds of me getting killed? Besides, I had George Woo, and then my dad, he knew people. I was from the community. I took over the job. I guess I held it together, but I don't know, I didn't do that good. I didn't, because of the

conditions. I wasn't even prepared to train to take this job, when I look at hindsight. You have to learn to write proposals and stuff like that. I can't even write my way out of law school. I mean, I was lucky to do term papers for history.

00:38:44 **Grace Yoo**: Well It was a lot, cause you were also, again, a dad. (M.W. 'Yea') You had a small child, and you're married. I mean, just seems like a lot of things.

00:38:51 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, too much and at that time, my wife and I were getting separated. (G.Y. "that's a lot going on.) Yeah, so, Ethnic Studies. I was walking down, I said, 'Hey, George, I can't go to this meeting. Why don't you go?' So George went to the meeting. Now, George is probably one of the smartest guys I've ever met in my life. This guy is such a deep thinker, he can see things. He should've been a politician. I bet you he could have ran for mayor and would've won. Me, I'm more happy, go lucky, I don't give a shit. Don't bother me, make it simple, but he can see things and he can focus. That's why he was able to pull Laureen in and then her up in State. I mean, to her, this is the furthest thing from her mind, but for him to be able to get the students together, like Danny Gonzalez, all these people. And then with the limited resources, with the Asian mentality, they would take one teaching position and split it into eight positions. I mean, that kind of creativity, on their part, helped the foundation of Asian American Studies. The problem with the Blacks (students), is that all those who got involved, they left. You had a vacuum. So they end up hiring people with all these fancy titles and stuff, but not really committed to any kind of program, they were for themselves. What Jeff Chan and all these guys, with the amount of people they trained, and then they all moved out. One of the essence of Asian American Studies was to train people to go back to the community to help them. That is the focus. Actually, I think that is the focus of education, is to train people to make society better. You know, and they're not doing it. Nowadays, colleges are ruined like corporations.

00:41:15 **Grace Yoo**: Especially now

00:41:16 **Mason Wong**: Now. professors they're more worried about salaries, and they're doing comparisons and stuff. Even when you're majoring in American Studies, a lot of Asian Americans who are in politics, they're becoming elitist, because they want to be part of the\ whites. They still have that mentality. I think even like this committee of 100, they're all elitists. I remember talking to them, they don't want me.

00:41:51 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah, but I have to say the 1968 SF State students, right? In history, it is the first multiracial multi-ethnic coalition. (M.W. 'Yeah') And it is the first, student strike, in the United States, actually.

00:42:05 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, because the other schools got the publicity, but this group, in terms of impact within the community is so strong. Even with the white students. they're still active.

00:42:24 **Grace Yoo**: What do you think solidarity looked like? Because you were a leader, and everyone's trying to show, like you said you were trying to demonstrate and teach them like our community has needs too, but when you look back, what do you think solidarity look like?

00:42:39 **Mason Wong**: I think we were on a mission to change American society. I think that was the focus because Martin Luther King came in and the involvement, the war in Vietnam. It got so bad, checked out a history on McNamara and he was taking people who were way down on the IQ levels sending them to Vietnam to get killed because they needed a body count. He doesn't talk about that. You know, so you got kids going to fight a war they have no idea. American society is full, so insular.

00:42:27 **Grace Yoo**: Do you remember some peers that have died during the Vietnam War?

00:43:34 **Mason Wong**: I think, oh, my sister's fiance got killed in Vietnam. He was ready to come back and he stepped on a landmine.

00:43:44 **Grace Yoo**: What was his name?

00:43:45 **Mason Wong**: Oh, it was a Japanese guy. That hit her quite a bit. At that time, what they did too was that a lot of the Asians that were drafted, they didn't send them to Asia. They sent them to Europe because you know, you'd get killed but there were a few that did.

00:44:12 **Grace Yoo**: By the way, do you remember when Martin Luther King was assassinated? Where were you? And, what came up for you?

00: 44:18 **Mason Wong**: I don't know, I just heard it on the news. I remember when Kennedy was killed, I was still in the Marines. We were having what we call our general inspection. So we had to do it that day was take all our equipment, and you lay it all out to show that you have everything. So we're laying things out and then the captain came in and said, 'Well, we just got word that Kennedy was shot.' So I said, 'Well, he only got shot, he'll be okay.' Then about half an hour later, he came back in, and then they said, he's gone. So we've got a new commander-in-chief. Also at that time, I was in San Francisco when the Cuban Missile Crisis. At that time, we were at high alert, even though we're an administrative unit, we were still on standby, and that's when people were scared. I remember I was in Chinatown going to eat, and there was the blockade that Cuba hasn't even started yet. Prior to that, when I was in bootcamp, we were training and then those guys came out, and said, well, an American U.S. spy plane was shot down over Russia. Stand by, we're gonna accelerate your training, and that time, we were scared shitless. You know, that was really bad. So in the end, all these things going on, and then the issue of civil rights and the number of Chinese coming into the US at that time. So we were fighting, like 'aye, it's time to get our share.' Previously, all the Chinese turned down leadership, were involved politically, but they were under the table, and supporting people. Then they were more with the establishment.

00:46:25 **Grace Yoo**: And so you all were coming up.

00:46:26 **Masong Wong**: We were the rebels. (G.Y. 'Exactly'). We had a street fair in Chinatown, and we had a booth, we sold Mao posters. Pissed everybody off because at that time, we were trying to say the contradiction here. You have China, you don't recognize, you have Taiwan. Taiwan government was influencing the chinese six companies. So any kind of decision, we were getting active and we want to make sure things are done properly. The Chinese

establishment(s) were doing it their way, they didn't give a shit. They're more concerned about Ms. Chinatown contest, and everything else. A lot of first generation Chinese activist like Larry Jack Wong and all those guys, they're getting involved, but then they just saw us come on, and said, 'ah I fuck, we're gonna use these kids.'

00:47:26 **Grace Yoo:** I mean, really, you were the Asian American movement. You inspired it all

00:47:30 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, (we said) fuck it, we're gonna turn this thing around. I think because we were in Chinatown, we knew everybody, we'd drink. Chinatown, at that time, (had) more bars in (its) concentrated area than any point in San Francisco (G.Y. 'really?') Yeah. We would start from Busch Street and drink at every bar all the way to Broadway.

00:47:59 **Grace Yoo**: I didn't know tha

00:48:00 **Mason Wong**: Oh, yeah. I mean, now you get a liquor license, it is very, very expensive.

00:48:12 **Grace Yoo**: Were the bars there to attract tourists?

00:48:14 **Mason Wong**: No, it was for the community. (G.Y. 'for the community?) It was their hangout.

00:48:19 **Garce Yoo**: Interesting. The bars? How fascinating.

00:48:25 **Mason Wong**: So I think the whole purpose of Asian American Studies is to train people to go back, in today's environment. Because in some way yeah, you need government to help you, but what you gotta do is have people come up with their own plans, and come up with more creative ideas. To take the money that they give you to use, and try to get the government to stop regulating. They want so much control, they're telling you what to do. What they should be doing is giving you money, because you know what to do with the money. We don't get enough of that going on today. So you're fighting back and forth,, so now you've got this huge bureaucracy that has their own self interest. It's just a life of its own. It just keeps rolling, keep rolling, and, in today's environment, all these kinds of emergencies that keep coming up. People are stressed out, people are actually going crazy. They can't handle it. So the school was supposed to train people to go back. Within San Francisco State in the State strike, to that, I think they were very successful. You had Gordon Chin, who started CDC and became an important community organization. A lot of them are retired, but they laid the groundwork, so the issue, I think, what is most concerning, talking with George, is the school doing enough of that, giving them back to the community, because you've got too many Asian people who are becoming too scholarly because that is the only way to get a pay raise. Now, they're using what's happened, the violence of Asian community. White people are getting involved, which I see as good, but I saw people starting to write grants out of this thing to get money. Everyone's pouring money, all these spokespeople, all over all these Asian American spokesperson(s) now coming out of the woodwork because they're feeling their oaths, but now they get a gathering. But then you talk to, even in New York City, you want to talk to gangs and stuff, you've got to ask the people that are

still there. They're not getting any help. They're not getting any help. You know? So I kind of made a comment, maybe in order to protect Chinatown, ‘we’ve gotta have gangs back in town.’

00:51:32 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah, right. I know. While I was talking to a colleague, I said, maybe service learning is about everyone figuring out martial arts, (M.W. ‘Yeah.’) and like protecting our elders. We need to get back to our roots.

00:51:48 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, get back to the roots. Like this last incident where this martial arts, Filipino martial arts guy took down a guy, and he says, I just did what I was taught. I think you have to get back into those basics that are getting driftedaway. And I think that's what the ethnic studies program should do, but what the other ethnic studies they’re getting too much in the scholar kick.

00:52:19 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah, that part of the academy. Although, I have to say many of our graduates, 50% of anyone that does an Asian American Studies major, they go into education, they’re teachers, like, there's so many teachers that have emerged, and you're going to become a teacher too.

00:52:31 **Mason Wong**: Yeah, So they have a different perspective?

00:52:34 **Grace Yoo**: They have a different perspective, and we do a lot of work in schools. So it's still there, even though, you don’t have to be a scholar, people were still doing that work, but often within the school system. And then on campus, trying to do somethings too.

00:52:50 **Mason Wong**: I think, within the educational field, we don't have enough third world people in positions, in the union. It is still a white organization because most of them don’t wanna deal with it. I don’t want to teach, I gotta go home and take care of my kids, so they don't support a lot of (what’s) going on. They have other priorities.

00:53:17 **Grace Yoo**: And then that’s the other factor to that, you know, we're living in the most expensive city in the world. You know, we would like everyone to go work with a nonprofit, but people are having to pay rent. (M.W. ‘Yeah, you can't afford it.’) Exactly. Thank goodness for teacher housing that they're trying to build.

00:53:36 **Mason Wong**: Well, even then, I got no money. When they get involved in it, they just get so many people into the process that it just takes forever. Then it's all gone. I went to buy some groceries the other day. Holy crap. What I bought, what I paid was like, two-something 260. A couple years ago, maybe that'd be 100 at most, and now it's so expensive. And rents going up in San Francisco. Always, so I mean, I can see San Francisco State Building, you know the building on 19th avenue, i don’t know what it's going to be.

00:54:36 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah, they still charge $2,000 to share a room. That's a public university, so that's still a lot for young people.

00:54:45 **Mason Wong**: I thought they had a master plan where they were going to expand the area. Very large. They're not building any student housing.

00:54:57 **Grace Yoo**: Yeah, they just built it on Hollaway, over there.

00:55:00 **Juice Canales**: It's really small though, in there. I've been there. It's like four rooms, but (they're) like so skinny and they're all sharing one bathroom, all sharing one kitchen and all still paying $2,000 per room. It's a lot like this.

…- 00:55:17-00:55:34

Grace Yoo and Juice Canales gathering their thoughts and questions?

00:55:34 **Juice Canales**: Another question we wanted to ask you is what lasting impact has your involvement with the SF state strike had on you?

00:55:47 **Mason Wong**: On me? I actually am a very quiet person. I guess it forced me to come out of my shell. But, after I was (getting) older, I realized that as a person, I had a lot of issues, myself, and so it took me a while to really even confront or admit it. So that's the part that, I am still going through. (G.Y. 'It's still evolving.') Yeah. I mean, I was going to a seminar where we would do self-improvement and stuff like that. Then they asked me, what did I think? And at that time, I just broke down and cried. And I just said, I just wanted to learn to be myself, you know? So now as I get older, I don't judge people like I used to. Like, this guy's a jerk, now I kind of back off because, I realized people have their own issues and because of that, it forms what they're thinking. A lot of times, what they're saying is not what they're really thinking, because of all these other pressures and issues that come up. So, I guess, I'm just learning to be more and more tolerant now.

Grace Yoo: Yea, and when you were younger, would you argue with people?

Mason Wong: I really don't. That's why I've always (been) a shy person because I from an intellectual standpoint, I don't think I have the intellectual acumen to be able to argue on solid ground because I'm more of a generalist. I don't get in(to) deep philosophical issues or try to really get into the essence so maybe I can really articulate something. I'm on the surface and I move on.

Grace Yoo: But as a kid, though, it sounded like if people mess with you, you know they need you to back off.

Mason Wong: Yeah, (you) just learn to defend yourself. I didn't care. I'd get in fights and stuff like that. I wasn't the kind of guy that a girl could bring home. I had a girlfriend in Seattle, her mother hated me. Her mother didn't like me at all.

Grace Yoo: But were you, as a kid, like, working out your own issues?

Mason Wong: I didn't know. I didn't realize, I was just trying to survive (G.Y. 'just

trying to survive?) Yeah, I just worried about myself.

Grace Yoo: Yeah, because It sounds like everything was so unstable, and so as a child, you're acting it up.

Mason Wong: Yeah, I guess in many ways. That's why when I was younger, I used to drink a lot. Smashed a flower shop's windows one time, when I was drunk. Woke our landlord, threatened to beat up his son-in-law. I had those issues.

Grace Yoo: Yeah, because I'm wondering if it was just because, as you're talking about your own biography, like your parents were doing their thing.

Mason Wong: Yeah, I was known as the town drunkard in Chinatown. My father would get pissed off, cause on the weekend we'd go out and get drunk like mad.

Grace Yoo: What age did things start to shift for you, where you weren't the town drunkard and when you weren't like a pistol, you know? what age?

Mason Wong: I think in my 30s.

01:00:00 **Grace Yoo**: Early 30s? (M.W. 'Yeah.') During the strike, you had that energy still.

Mason Wong: Yeah. Oh, shoot. The strike, I'll tell you, one of the fun parts of it, we would go on these talk shows, and late at night, in those days they had the blue light and they have these neon posters inside. They were all smoking dope and stuff and talking. (G.Y. 'Was it filmed too?') No, we were just talking over radio. Those days, like K-pool and those guys. I think, one time I got so drunk, that I just realized that's it. I passed out on the kitchen floor, I crapped in my pants and everything.

Grace Yoo: And then that was a pivotal moment.

Mason Wong: I said, this gotta end. Then I met my second wife, Massie. So that's one of my main reasons I really changed and calmed down.

Grace Yoo: Was this before you met her or was it right at the same time.

Mason Wong: Probably the same time. (G.Y. 'you're early 30s?) Yeah. She came in and seduced me.

Grace Yoo: Well, it also changed. Maybe you truly could change with that support.

Mason Wong: Yeah, I guess so. I think, I met her, I was divorced at that time, and the minute I knew I was in Vegas and we got married.

Grace Yoo: And then, you had more kids after that?

Mason Wong: Yeah, then I had the two boys. We got married, then she said she wanted to have kids. So we tried for a while, didn't worked out. And then I said, okay, we're going to buy a car, next minute she was pregnant, but then she had a miscarriage and it took a while. Later she

got pregnant and we had my two boys. (G.Y. ‘she was a good influence’) Yeah, I guess so. I mean, I mean, today she's more popular in Chinatown than I am. I grew up in Chinatown. She knows more people.

Grace Yoo: Did she go to state too?

Mason Wong: No, she went to Canada (for) school. She went to the University of Alberta.

Grace Yoo: Was she an immigrant from Canada?

Mason Wong: From Hong Kong to Canada to come to here

Grace Yoo: From Honk Kong to Canada, to the United States. She came from Hong Kong as a teenager?

Mason Wong: Yeah. She left as a teenager. Hers is a story in itself. (G.Y. ‘Yeah, it sounds like it.’) Yeah. Her mother is one of the most famous women in Hong Kong in terms of celebrity and all that shit.

Grace Yoo: Now, during the strike, were you arrested?

Mason Wong: Yeah, we were in the 400 that got busted. Worst mistake of the strike, we should have just broke apart. We stayed, yeah, they surrounded us but we could still break through. Then they were was like, stay calm. Stay calm.

Grace Yoo: Do you remember what that felt like?

Mason Wong: They just put us on buses, and then we went to City Hall

Grace Yoo: And you were just there for a night?

Mason Wong: Yeah, just late night they finally got me out.

Grace Yoo: Do you remember the memory, your memory in jail?

Mason Wong: Oh, yeah. Guys were sent back, and they were just commiserating. Some of the guys they’d get in jail and say, ‘Hey, pig’. They threw him in solitary. Cracking up, holy shit

Grace Yoo: Oh, my goodness! And you were a dad at the time, and you had a wife and a kid. (M.W. ‘Yeah’) What were they thinking at that moment?

Mason Wong: Well, I think Alice Barkely called my wife. Is like, Oh yeah, Mason’s in jail, but he’ll get out pretty soon. So I got out, my wife and I, we didn't talk about it that much.

Grace Yoo: You didn't talk about it that much? Okay. Would she not want you to be part of the strike?

Mason Wong: Well, she didn't say too much about it. In a way, she didn't like it

because it took me away from that place, and our relationship, cause were young and stuff like that. In a way, I think we were kind of drifting apart too.

Grace Yoo: That's amazing though, because you had so much going on in your life.

Mason Wong: Yeah, that was fucked up.

Grace Yoo: Well, you were committed to the strike. What made you commit to the strike, cause you had all this other stuff going on.

01:05:03 **Mason Wong**: Well, when I was in the service, I was going to get shipped overseas, so I had to report to the marine base, and they're gathering us. One of the first guys who kind of befriended me there was a Black guy, and I think he was a sergeant. He kind of took me under his wing and he started telling me about how the Black Marines and the social gathering they called, they had a name for themselves, they call themselves Spliffs, at that time. They understood the prejudices and stuff like that. They kind of made me aware of what they go through and when I was stationed in Japan, then I would notice it. One of the guys that worked with me in the office, I noticed one time when we were in the Chow Hall I was sitting in one place, and he's over there at a table. All of a sudden a Black guy sits at his table, and he just picked up his stuff and moved to another table. I think I asked him about it. He said, well, I don't have anything against them, but, I just don't want to be with them. So within the Marines from the South, they were aware of it. And my drill instructor, he married a Hispanic girl and he was stationed in, I think, Texas. He was upset because they wouldn't let his son go to the white regular schools. So when we were going through drills at that type time. I would watch the movie 'Full Metal Jacket', that's what we went through, and when he got these guys from the South, oh my God, he would bare on them, 'You motherfuckers, you don't let my kid go to school. Texas, you bastards.' He would just harass them. It was funny. Yeah, he had a Mexican wife, and when they what to go to different duty stations, he had a tough time getting his kids to school. I think became more aware of that. And, I heard, Al, when he went to the Air Force. It's all about, color-only bathrooms and stuff like that. Yeah, that was going on. So, we're Asians, you don't know which bathroom you're supposed to go to. I became more aware of it than I think because (of) my upbringing at the Chinese boy's home. I started learning what's right and wrong. It was a Christian school. You learned that even though you're Asian, you had to do 110% better to stay even. You always had to work hard, that was drilled into us. I guess the sense of injustice kind of grew, because of the environment we were in. I guess when that strike came along, (I) started getting involved, because it was directly trying to 1.) Get more Asian students into college. At that time in the strike, there weren't that many minorities, we were very small, small percentage. That's why, even though in City college, there were a lot of us there.

Grace Yoo: What was your task after the strike? Everyone had volunteered to do other things. What was your task?

Mason Wong: Oh, Mine, I kind of graduated and, had to go to law school.

Grace Yoo: Were you pretty EOP? Terrence was part of EOP.

Mason Wong: No. (G.Y. 'Okay') When I came in, all of a sudden the GI Bill came out,

so I got my monthly G.I. Money. And then, went to law school, but, that time, I think (I) was trying to go be an attorney to save the world. (G.Y. 'Yeah.') (like) Holy Shit, I don't belong here. Because I always like(d the) money

(Grace Yoo offering Mason Wong more water, Juice Canales assures Mason on the importance of his background stories)

01:10:35 **Juice Canales**: Is there any part of this, your involvement with the strike that you regret, or you wish you did differently or anything like that?

Mason Wong: Not really. I mean, I think it was just a convergence of a lot of factors, and we all got moving. Everyone, in a lengthy way, was single-minded about trying to change things. How we go about it, maybe some people had different opinions about it. I think our focus because of the strike was the community, so what we're trying to do was help enhance the community and to fight for the community. So using the San Francisco state strike gave us a platform to talk about the problems of the community, even though they had people in the community talking about it. But we were able to voice it in different directions, and getting a lot of the Asian students to come to San Francisco, to go to school. A lot of students that were involved weren't born in Chinatown. It was only a small percentage of us. A lot came from different areas, and I think one of the Vetran Youth Leaders said that ICSA brought Chinese College students who never experience Chinatown got them involved in the community.

Grace Yoo: Which I found interesting in terms of being part of the strike, because a lot of folks were insular, but here they came to San Francisco State. It's the strike. And they're trying to show solidarity with other groups that they probably didn't really interact with. Everyone was in their own little community. Even among Chinese folks trying to find commonalities with, like, Japanese folks, right?

Mason Wong: Yeah, I think it's a period of self-awareness. I think that's where everybody came (in)to, more aware. So I think that's what it created, even for white students. That's when women's studies started gaining ground. That's why I get upset at times, San Francisco State does not get the credit that it really deserves. Berkeley. They haven't done shit. They haven't. Their program sucks, hasn't gotten anywhere, even though they had like guys a Ling-Chi Wang and everything else, but they were never community-oriented. I think some of the state programs now follow the (SF) State's example.

Grace Yoo: People always refer to the 1968 students at San Francisco State. It's always referenced.

Mason Wong: That's the foundation.

Grace Yoo: It is a foundation, and young people like Juice. There's a like an interest in this next generation on what you all were like. In fact, she's (Juice Canales) going to write a children's book, a young adult novel. I can already see Mason being a character. (Second Int 'Yeah.')

Mason Wong: But what it is was San Francisco State was a working-class college,(G.Y. ‘right’) People forget that.

Grace Yoo: I think that's why the stories are even more powerful. You know, you came to State, you were a veteran, and. you came here and you became the leader of ICSA. (M.W. ‘Yeah, by default.’) And here you are, you know, trying to create coalitions and be in solidarity with these other groups to build the College of Ethnic Studies. That's like a first.

01:14:50 **Mason Wong**: Well, I think what happened too, was that the interaction we had with the other groups, some of them became longtime friends, like, Roger Alvarado. You still see them, Nesbit Crutchfield, Benny Stuart. Benny Stuart, when I went into the insurance business, it was Benny Stuart that gave me my first break because I sold a big package to WAPAC, a community organization in the Fillmore. So I told them how to get government money into their pockets, and that's how I started my career, going to all nonprofits and doing this, funneling money out. Once in a while, one of the guys would come up to me, and said, ‘Man, you helped me out when you got that program?’ He was separated from his wife, he had no money. He’d said, ‘oh, take that money from the insurance policy to get me started.’ And another guy said the same thing to me, I think it was Wade ‘Speedy’ Woods. Speedy just died about last year. But the interaction we had he with Terry Collins, just talking to each other. We would be able to argue, and yell and all that kind of stuff. I mean, a lot of time, the meetings long because, one reason it was long we would let everyone say their piece, and that's why those meeting took for fucking ever, man.

Grace Yoo: Maybe that's what solidarity is about, it’s like everyone has the chance to say their piecece and everyone listens.

Mason Wong: Yeah, you gotta give them their due. And even though you don't agree with it, but at least they get to take it out. After a while, you might say well okay, there's a certain aspect about it that I support you with.

Grace Yoo: And then everyone's there listening, just sitting. That’s solidarity too, just listening.

Mason Wong: Yeah, and then you had a lot of white students, that was a period of developing their own awareness because you had the war and then you had the theme of becoming aware of stuff. I mean, they started their own thing with all this and then, (asking themselves) ‘what does it mean to me?’ They're coming up, they're developing their own trains of thought.

Grace Yoo: Would you say the strike gave you purpose and d that purpose influenced the rest of your life?

Mason Wong: I don't know, because after the strike, I wanted to go in the business world and all that. I (was) kind of more detached from the community. I don't do that much. My wife was much more involved in the community than I am. She's always in these fundraisers and stuff like that. After I go to some of the meetings, they're still arguing over the same stuff over

and over. Oh my God. Then the same people bringing it up… I think it helped me because I became president of the San Francisco Employee Union Pension Fund. And all of sudden, it gave me insight on where the big money really is. That helped me expand my world

Grace Yoo: And expand taking on leadership. (M.W. 'Yeah.') Special leadership and also a critical leader, in a way, right?

Mason Wong: Yeah, then they took me off the board because I want to support Mayor Jordan because they wanted to adjust the contribution. I said you can't do that. So now the city pension fund is in deep shit because of the health benefits. God, if I knew. I think back, I should have worked for City Hall because at that time, in like five years, I have free health benefits for the rest of my life. God, that's worth millions and hundreds of thousands of dollars. I had a chance to work in the political route, I was offered a position (with), at that time, it was senator Tunney. I said, well, I don't think he's going to win the next election, that's why I didn't take it. I thought maybe if I did, I would have maybe got into the political arena, but when I see that world, it's too much. (G.Y. 'It's a lot') A lot of compromises, a lot of ass-kicking and, owing people. I mean, I see Mayley, she has to do a lot of ass-kicking (to) open the door for a lot of Asians and stuff like that, but in that process you become part of that system. Their way of thinking helps them, but then a lot of the Asian politicians we got now, they're part of that package deal. I mean, the only advocate I really saw that we had in Chinatown was Rose Pak. Now there's no Rose Pak, and what do we have now? Nothing. Then the few male agents we got, they went to jail. Holy cow. They had a chance to do something, and they do something stupid. I mean, God Almighty, don't have the brightest people in the world.

01:20:50 **Grace Yoo**: Let's see, we cover all (questions). Do you have any questions for us? By the way, we're going to review the transcript, and we're going to make another follow up Interview, but this is our first interview with you.

Mason Wong: I guess after talking to you guys, I just kind of feel comforted that you guys are going to come up with your story, but then you trying to give us some…

Grace Yoo: Well We want to preserve it, and you were interviewed a decade ago. If you're on the computer, I'll send you the link, but the audio was like, wow, they were doing it like in the cafe.

Mason Wong: Oh, that was Laureen's husband interviewing me.

Grace Yoo: That's why we were like, we need to really do this. (M.W. 'That was Lori's husband. Yeah.') Well, it was great to have it.

Mason Wong: Yeah, it was a long time ago. One time I checked my name up on Google or something. Then all of a sudden, I see myself in that thing. I said, yeah, that Loreen's husband.

Grace Yoo: Yeah, he had done that one? I mean, it's so great to have you reviewed it before we interviewed. (Juice Canales 'the 10 min one? It was pretty short') Yeah it was pretty short, and it was a little noisy right.

Mason Wong: Yeah, I think it was like the 20th anniversary of something like that

Grace Yoo: Yeah, it was so great to have it though because you were, you know president of the ICSA, so you had that and this is so great to have this.

(End of Interview: Reviewing questions and Juice Canales thanking Mason Wong for their time. The three members go into appreciations and small stories on member Al Wong and his dating history. Grace Yoo speaks on the moments she mostly liked. Mason Wong brings up a photograph he's been looking for, of members of the 1968-1969 strikes on 16th and Holloway. He mentions how is no longer allowed on campus because he was kicked out and in high court lawsuit, Wong v Hayakawa. Supreme Court Case was overturned because students are allowed due process before dismissal from school.)